

On the Subject of Project Life Cycles¹

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

15 August 2023

Ref: Robert Buttrick's August 2023 commentary article² and Paul Giammalvo's August letter-to-the-editor³ about my June 2023 'Sophie's Choice' article⁴

Dear Editor,

After reading Robert Buttrick's commentary on my superficial internet survey in the June 2023 issue wherein I critically highlighted the differences between various organizations' project life cycle "phases," *I stand corrected!* PMI's '**Five Process Group**' construct -- **Initiate, Plan, Execute, Monitor & Control**, and **Closeout** -- served me well throughout my career; but I failed to remember PMI's PMBOK is only a **Guide** -- rather than a universal standard -- and other terminology could be more suited to differing organizational scope, perspectives, context, and/or customary usage. As my colleague Paul Giammalvo also excoriated me -- *and others* -- at length, we should strive to be as grammatically (pragmatically) and semantically clear and correct as possible. **Mea culpa. I apologize for my lapse.**

Moreover, my myopic observation that evaluation was beyond the Project Manager's responsibility stemmed from both the conspicuous absence of evaluative tools & techniques in PMI's PMBOK, 6TH edition of only five Process Groups, as well as my experience with numerous projects in many different sectors and countries throughout my career. However, -- *as Robert enlightened me* -- although my experience has been extensive, my horizon was nevertheless not completely comprehensive!

Indeed, as he elucidated, some types of projects **do** include an "**Operational Phase – or Stage: viz.**

¹ How to cite this work: Smith, K. F. (2023). On the Subject of Project Life Cycles, Letter to the Editor, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XII, Issue IX, September.

² Buttrick, R. (2023). Response to Project Life Cycle * Sophie's Choice, commentary, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XII, Issue VIII, August. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/pmwj132-Aug2023-Buttrick-response-to-project-life-cycles.pdf>

³ Giammalvo, P.D. (2023). On the Subject of Project Life Cycles, In Response to July Letter to Editor by Piney and June Article by Smith, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XII, Issue VIII, August. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/pmwj132-Aug2023-Giammalvo-in-response-to-Piney-and-Smith-on-project-life-cycles.pdf>

⁴ Smith, K. F. (2023). Project Life Cycle * Sophie's Choice: What's in a Word? Commentary, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XII, Issue VI, June. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/pmwj130-Jun2023-Smith-project-life-cycle-sophies-choice-2.pdf>

“The last phase(s) of a project can include a period of ‘initial operation’ and it is in this phase that business or societal changes can happen and benefits start to be realized i.e. the outcomes of the project start to be apparent. In an ‘asset’ type of project (such as infrastructure) this is often what contracts refer to as the ‘maintenance period.’ Accordingly, in such cases, the business and societal change activities are within the project’s scope and benefits realization starts to be observed and measured. The project manager would be managing such activities (as they are within scope), although the people doing that work (on the project team) would more than likely be specialists in that work and/or members of the department(s) (for business changes) where the change is happening. Also remember that in many approaches . . . ‘project management’ is considered wider than just what a project manager is accountable for. Those approaches (including in BS 6079, ISO 21502, GovS 002 and PRINCE2) have the project sponsor, work package managers and team members within the scope of ‘project management’. As a further example, the business case is a deliverable within ‘project management,’ owned by the project sponsor.”

In short, projects can be of different types, shapes, sizes and durations. So ‘one size does not fit all!’

Finally, my comment regarding professionalism was not intended to demean the status or self-worth of project managers, but rather that project management practitioners are essentially self-regulated and practice the tools of trade; unlicensed and unfettered by international, national or local government standards and regulating authorities as are other professions. However, once again I was apprised that in the United Kingdom licensing is not a criterion. Instead, many professional organizations have Royal Charters, and self-regulation under the constraints of their Charter is sufficient.

In conclusion, on the positive side, I deeply appreciate the wealth of additional information provided by Messrs Buttrick & Giammalvo. My errors elicited their respective responses -- which otherwise would have remained dormant -- and their lengthy expositions which are both comprehensive and thorough, stand as exemplary guides and references for all PMWJ readers.

Sincerely,

[Dr. Ken Smith](#)

Manila, The Philippines